

Theodore Roosevelt once said:

A man who was good enough to shed blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterward.

Of course, in our time we say a man and a woman.

T.R. was right, and the men and women who are shedding blood for our Nation today in the cause of liberty and doing so in a way that has fundamentally improved the security of the American people here at home should know their families will be taken care of no matter what happens to them.

I can't think of a piece of legislation which I have been involved in my over 17 years in the Senate that I have felt better about. This is one of those occasions that doesn't get celebrated quite enough where we forget the party labels, Republican and Democrat, and act in a higher calling, which is our status as Americans which unites us all. I am glad to see we are about to put these reforms in place.

We all recognize we have to keep faith with our service men and women. We have to give them a square deal. They are doing their duty to protect us, and it is our duty to protect their families, should they give their lives in defense of our liberty. That is what the provisions in the supplemental do. I am proud to have been a part of it. I am grateful to my colleagues for supporting it. I urge its adoption.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I associate myself with the comments of Senator LIEBERMAN and say how he expressed my feelings about this important legislation. It has been a pleasure to work with him in a bipartisan way. He has demonstrated time and again his interest in matters of national defense and national security and his commitment to those who serve us. I, too, believe, as was discussed not too long ago at one of the hearings, there is a bond between the American people and those we send out to defend our interests in dangerous areas of the world. We as American people need to honor that bond.

One of the commitments I think we must make as a people is to say to those who go in harm's way to execute the just policies of the United States that if something happens to you, we are going to try to take care of your family. That is one thing you don't need to worry about.

I believe the HEROES bill, as we named it, honoring every requirement of exemplary service, is the legislation that moves us a long way in that regard. I couldn't be more excited. I thank the Appropriations Committee Chairman, Senator COCHRAN, and the ranking member, Senator BYRD, for their support of making this a part of the supplemental.

We certainly have worked hard in trying to gain support from the military community and the Department

of Defense which understands exactly how and what we should do to better support those who lose their lives in the service to their country. We did a number of things.

Two years ago, as part of the Defense bill I asked that we put in language to study this. Senator LIEBERMAN and I talked about it. And they put that language in. We have gotten some studies back. We began to figure and think about what we could do to make families more secure in the case of the loss of a loved one. Last year, they completed the study and we began to look at it. The President and the Secretary of Defense responded to our request promptly and, I believe, honestly and objectively.

The Senate report that is before us today recommended increasing the death gratuity benefit from \$12,420 to \$100,000 for our service members who die on active duty in a combat theater, and then we amended the bill to include those who serve on active duty who lose their lives. It also allows, as I have proposed, for every member of the military to raise the level of coverage under the servicemen's group life insurance which is capped out at \$250,000 to \$400,000. I believe that is a more legitimate sum for a family suffering this kind of loss.

Additionally, for those serving in the combat zone or a designated contingency, the Department of Defense will pay the member's premium for the first \$150,000 of insurance to guarantee they are participants in that program.

The report before us also makes these changes retroactive to cover those who lost their lives since the beginning of the global war on terrorism which began October 7, 2001. Families of our service members who have died since October 7, 2001, will receive a one-time cash payment of \$238,000 which is a sum of the added coverage of life insurance, \$150,000 more life insurance, coupled with proposed increase of the death gratuity of \$88,000.

Finally, the report will place language in the law to require service members to inform their spouses of the level of coverage that may be enacted.

As I conclude my remarks, let me be clear on this issue. There is no amount of compensation that can replace the loss of a loved one. Not for a soldier, not for a police officer, not for a teacher, or a fireman. However, our military service members volunteer to leave their families and engage in a very difficult and dangerous campaign to defeat terrorists and secure peace and prosperity not only for America but for countless millions around the world. The training and operations conducted to ready them for combat are also dangerous and will also be included in the death gratuity section of the report. The enhancements of the death gratuity and SGLI outlined in this bill reflect the risks and dangers faced by our service men and women as they serve us around the world.

The language stays true to what our President requested in the supple-

mental and what Senator LIEBERMAN and I put in S. 77, the HEROES bill. This report and the death benefits enhancements offered are based on a sound analysis of this highly important and emotional issue. We can never do enough to thank these brave Americans. Each and every one of them who serves us in our military today is a national treasure.

I am thankful and grateful that the Senate has included the HEROES provision in this report, and I look forward to voting on this bill and seeing it enacted into law.

I note that not too many months ago I flew from Baghdad to Kuwait in a C-130 late at night, and there were two flag-draped coffins of soldiers who had given their lives in service to our country. Yesterday, I talked with the daughter, 25 years old, of Sergeant Major Banks. Her mother, a sergeant major in the Army, was one of the soldiers who died in the tragic helicopter crash in Afghanistan recently. I talked to her about her mother, and how much she admired her mother, and to think how she had risen through the ranks to become a sergeant major, growing up in a poor area of Alabama, African American, who inspired her daughter, Shante Banks, as she described her mother's influence on her life. She gave her life serving our country, as many have.

I believe we have done the right thing here. I think it is going to be a good step forward. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with Senator LIEBERMAN as we have moved this legislation forward.

I thank the President and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. I thank the Senator from Alabama and the Senator from Connecticut for the great work they have done in recognizing the sacrifice of our men and women who are fighting for freedom's cause in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places around the world. This is important legislation. I am pleased to be able to support their efforts and to see it becomes a matter of law.

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 12 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENSIGN). Without objection, it is so ordered.